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THE ORGANIZATION
OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY
IN NEW CASTLE COUNTY

by

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SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to study the organization of a political party at the county level in order to gain a complete picture of both the formal and actual working arrangements, and to establish who controls the organization and how this control is maintained. The study will be concentrated on one party in order to learn as much as possible about the informal behind-the-scene activities. This type of research requires personal contacts within the party with both workers and leaders.

The importance of the county unit in our two major political organizations is readily conceded by political observers; despite this fact it has been almost completely ignored. An intensive study is called for.

THE COUNTY AND ITS RELATION TO THE STATE

Counties have been used for years as the basis for the legal organization of the party. In no two states would the county stand in exactly the same relation to the general party organization of the state, nor would counties within the same state have uniform influence. New Castle County is distinguished from the two other counties in Delaware by the inclusion of the city of Wilmington within its boundaries. Although New Castle has a majority of the votes in the state both the state legislature and the state nominating conventions of

both parties are controlled by the two predominantly rural counties. The administrative duties of each county are considerable and many political jobs are available for party patronage. Political jobs are necessary to maintain at least a core of year-around workers. Because the mainspring of a state political organization is the county unit and county jobs make it possible for the county unit to operate autonomously, it is necessary to control or to cooperate with those who do control the county units before political control over the state organization can be gained.

FORMAL ORGANIZATION

The formal organization of the County Executive Committee of New Castle County is easily summarized. The county is divided into ten representative districts called hundreds and the city is divided into twelve wards with five representative districts. Both the wards and hundreds are subdivided into election districts. The complete county committee is composed of a man and a woman from each election district in the county outside of Wilmington, plus eleven members from the city. While nominally under the county chairman, Wilmington with its own city committee can operate independently. The entire membership of the county committee is close to 150.

The committee members in each of the wards and hundreds also serve as the members of the local committees and help elect their hundred and ward party officials. The city committee members elect the officials of the city committee and the chairman of the county committee is supposedly elected by this mass membership from the rural hundreds and eleven members from Wilmington.

A new county committee is elected and organized every two years at the public call of the county chairman or secretary. While a complicated procedure is provided for contested elections of committee members, the usual procedure is to call a party meeting in the respective local units and choose anyone who agrees to take the position. Rarely are these selections contested.

The usual duties of a county committee are listed by the rules. The county committee, with its chairman, is supposed to coordinate the local election districts with the county and the county with the state, and county leaders are responsible for developing effective organization at the grass roots. The actual working organization of a county may not follow, however, the formal arrangements outlined in the party rules.

NEW CASTLE COUNTY DEMOCRACY AS A WORKING ORGANIZATION

The informal organization does not always correspond to outward appearance, nor do the actual working arrangements always follow the prescribed rules.

The large size of the county committee makes it impossible for it to function as formally contemplated. The modus operandi is a meeting of the local hundred chairmen and the county leaders to discuss important county-wide party problems.

Large sums of money are needed to keep the organization going, and this along with party patronage is the most difficult problem

facing the county chairman. By employing the patronage whip, money allotments, and skillful political strategy, controls can be maintained over the county organization. County leaders also utilize the factor of local autonomy to help maintain their own control. The scattered independent local leaders find it hard to combine to defeat the small, but solid, bloc of organization votes. Local leaders can remain as free of the county leaders as they desire. They are usually in complete control of their district and have served for many years. County leaders stay clear of any purely local arguments. Although a hundred chairman can remain independent, the ones who do are extremely rare. Everything possible is done to maintain party harmony, and because of the juxtaposition of the tendencies toward local autonomy and oligarchic control within the same organization, political power remains very fluid. To retain authority, county leaders must be able to compromise, influence, persuade, or concede when necessary.

The most important function of the leaders of the county organization is to control nominations. They do this through the knowledge they have gained of the informal, as well as formal, organization of the party and by the use of such concrete controls as filing fees.

For years, the words "Ninth and Market" have served as a symbol of top Democratic authority in state as well as county politics. The words refer to one of Delaware's oldest law firms. The members of this firm have retained their political authority through their control over party finances, and the political acumen they have acquired. Anti-organization men have tried to wrest political control from these

leaders. Although they may temporarily gain the formal leadership of the county committee, they soon discover they have little authority because they remained outside the informal party organization.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has tried to depict the interplay occurring between the formal and the informal organization of a county political unit. Top party leaders have been able to retain their control because of their complete understanding of this interplay and by their ability to retain control over a large share of party finances.

Counteracting this tendency towards centralization at county and state level is a tendency toward local autonomy within the same organization.

The clash of these two tendencies helps make possible the expressing of political opinion at the grass roots.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to study intensively the organization of a political party at the county level. It is hoped that by concentrating on one party and investigating it as thoroughly as possible that a clear picture will be gained of both the formal and the actual working arrangements in a major political party. At the same time, the study should establish who controls the organization and how they maintain control.

To initiate a project of this sort requires preliminary work in the library of a newspaper office. But a greater part of the time involved in research must be diverted to personal interviews with both major and minor party personalities in the county organization. Differences of opinion with respect to the purpose and functions of the party are to be expected. People who opposed the faction in control of the organization in the past and those who can be termed as unfriendly to the party leaders of today must also be questioned. Critical examination of the varying viewpoints is necessary for the gaining of an adequate picture of party operations.

The present study was preceded by an analysis of a rural election district in the same county.¹ The previous study, having laid a

1. Pollari, W. J., "Political Trends in Pencader Hundred, 1900-1950," University of Delaware Library.

groundwork for this paper, has in many ways simplified and reduced the amount of work to be done. Those investigations made it possible to proceed with the task of fitting together the pieces that go to make up the county organizational scene.

Most political writers agree that the county unit (along with city organizations) is one of the most important, if not the most important, of all political divisions. Those who can dominate the county organization can influence the state and local political arena. Curiously enough, despite the county's apparent importance, very little research has been done on this level. This is evident by the fact that most political science texts brush over the topic. Only a few words mentioning the county committee as the connecting link between district and state committees are all that is allotted before the text goes on to more engrossing subjects or to topics that have been more thoroughly explored. For example, Merriam and Gosnell wrote as early as 1929 in their book on the American party system:

"The county, then deserves a larger place in the examination of political leadership than is usually accorded to it.---
The local county leaders are likely to be factors of some importance, and to weigh heavily in the state convention or primary, or in the choice of Congressmen or the choice of delegates to national conventions. Either on the sordid side of spoils, on the working side of organization, or as the basis of party principles and policies, they may be of great practical importance."²

With statements of this sort to back up the claim, a closer study of a county organization is warranted - if not mandatory.

2. Merriam, C.E., and Gosnell, H.F., The American Party System, (1929) MacMillan Co., New York, 87.

Undoubtedly it would be valuable if a study of the Republican organization in New Castle County could be done at the same time, for the vote of the two parties has been well-balanced in the last six elections. But research of this nature, if it is to be accurate and add anything to what is already generally known about political organizations, requires at least a speaking acquaintance with party members and leaders and the complete assurance on their part that they are talking to a fellow worker who has the best interest of the party at heart. It is difficult for an investigator who has acquired the confidence of the members of one party to gain information from members of the other party. At the same time, it is desirable for an investigator not to be attached in any way to family or personal factions within the party. An obvious fact, even to the casual observer, is that Democratic political maneuvers can make as many fast enemies as well as lasting friendships. Quite often the "sins" of the father are left to the son, and personal animosities continue for years to lurk in the background.

The examination conducted for this thesis has attempted to include every possible source of authority and to delineate all working arrangements that make the party function. The formal rules of party organization, no matter how perfectly they may be drawn, are but the bones and sinews of the real party structure; the flesh and blood are supplied by the personalities who find politics either a profitable business or an intriguing hobby. Both factors have to be considered in any adequate appraisal of county politics.

CHAPTER 2

THE COUNTY AND ITS RELATION TO THE STATE

Counties, in general, have been used for many years as the basis for the legal organization of the party, as in apportionment for state elections and in acts for bringing the parties under legal control, and also for the purely extra-legal activities of the party. In no two states does the county have exactly the same relation to the general party organization of the state, nor would the counties within the same state have uniform influence on the politics of the state.¹

New Castle County, one of the three counties into which the small state of Delaware is divided, is distinguished from the two "down state" counties of Kent and Sussex by the inclusion of the city of Wilmington within its boundaries. Although New Castle County has a majority of the voters in the State, the two lower counties can control both the state legislature and the state nominating conventions of either party. The state senators are divided five to a county, and two for Wilmington; the state representatives, ten for each county plus five for Wilmington. At Democratic state conventions a county is allotted sixty delegates, six from each representative district in the county, while Wilmington is allowed thirty delegates which are apportioned by the city committee.²

1. Jones, C.L., "The County in Politics," *Am. Acad.* 47, 85 (1913).

2. The supreme power of the party is vested in a state convention totaling 210 delegates, 106 votes being needed to win any nomination.

The political parties of Delaware are organized by state law on the county level,³ and the administrative duties left to elected county officials, are many and of considerable importance. The following county offices are still elected: Clerk of Peace, four years; Register in Chancery, four years; Sheriff, two years; Coroner, two years; Receiver of Taxes, four years; Comptroller, four years; Prothonotary, four years; Register of Wills, four years; Recorder of Deeds, four years; Clerk of Orphan's Court, four years.

The three man Levy Court⁴ is the chief disperser of political jobs in the county. Each Levy Court Commissioner serves six years in office, the terms being staggered and the men coming from each of the three Levy Court districts into which the county is divided. As many as one hundred sixty political jobs are listed as being at the disposal of the Levy Court, but in actual practice the number of jobs is much smaller - running closer to seventy. Top positions, like county engineers, are unsuitable for political spoils for the rank and file party members. Also, many of the appointments are, according to statute, bi-partisan, and for this reason jobs like the county-police are sometimes untouched by a change in the political complexion of the court. A common practice, however, when making important appointments to a bi-partisan board like the Board of Assessments is to appoint a member of the opposition party who is out of favor with his own party. Needless to say, control over the

3. Revised Code of Delaware (1955), Sec. 1810.

4. The Levy Court is primarily a tax levying agency and is the administrative head of the county, meeting every Tuesday to transact county business.

County Levy Court is strongly desired by both political organizations. If the jobs under the authority of the Court are wisely distributed to party workers, a strong county organization can be established.

The Republican Party has been in control in Delaware for the greater part of the last fifty years. Since 1900, only two Democratic governors have been elected (both after 1936) and only two Democratic Attorneys General on the "off year" elections. There has always been a substantial Democratic vote, however, and several of the governorships were lost to the opposition by only a few hundred votes. Kent County, with a strong Democratic organization, has in most elections remained firmly Democratic - primarily, it is thought through the firm but able leadership of the late James Wolcott as county chairman. Both Sussex and New Castle Counties have been predominantly Republican. In recent years Wilmington has shown a tendency to go Democratic in presidential elections, while in city and "off year" elections, with a much smaller turn-out of voters, it has remained strongly Republican.

A few general comments about the Democratic party on a state wide basis should precede a closer examination of the county struggles. Every party has its share of factional fights, and the Democratic party of Delaware is no exception. The Saulsbury-Wolcott feud, the most famous one, and later the Wolcott-Bayard controversy, kept re-appearing in one form or another in almost every election. Presaging a Democratic victory in 1948 was the complete harmony with which the present generation of the opposing families worked together for the victory.

The fact that state and city political jobs, as well as county jobs, have remained for the most part in Republican control has seriously affected the Democratic county unit. The Democrats have never had control over all three counties at the same time. In addition, a great deal of state and city administration is carried out by boards and commissions appointed by the governor and mayor at staggered intervals. In order to gain effective control over all these commissions, and the jobs under their authority, a party should win the governorship or the mayoralty for two consecutive terms. The Democrats have not succeeded in doing this. In the one previous election when the Democrats did win the highly prized governor's seat, both houses were in the control of the Republican party by a two-thirds vote. The very important State Highway Commission with hundreds of jobs at its disposal was then removed from the Democratic governor's control by passage of controversial "ripper" legislation which required a three-fifths vote for approval over the governor's veto. Never has the Democratic party had the command of patronage that its rival has had. Politicians will agree that volunteer workers are effective and are needed to carry a major part of the work during an election campaign. The real work of a party, however, has to be continued on a year-round basis with a core of party workers who depend for their livelihood on political jobs. Democratic ward and hundred chairmen and the committeemen under them can be forced to do a thorough job in their district only if their bread and butter are dependent on their party's victory at the polls.

The main spring of a state political organization is the county unit, and to have a strong statewide organization, the county com-

mittees must first be well organized. In Delaware and in many other states, parties are organized on the county level by law, and county elective offices are the principal source of political jobs. With these jobs a county unit can operate autonomously, provided the leadership and funds are available. To gain political control over a state, it is necessary either to control or manipulate the county organizations or to cooperate with those who do control the counties.

CHAPTER 3

FORMAL ORGANIZATION

The formal organization of the Democratic Party in New Castle County is known as the Democratic County Executive Committee of New Castle County. This formal organization can be summarized in a few paragraphs. The basic structure is as simple in New Castle as elsewhere.

The complete County Executive Committee is composed of a man and woman from each election district in the county outside of Wilmington. Ten members, five men and five women, from Wilmington serve on the committee - two coming from each of the five representative districts in the city. The city chairman is an ex-officio member. When the county rules were last revised in 1922, Wilmington's voice in county meetings was greatly reduced. The city was willing to agree to this apportionment because it was felt then, as it is now, Wilmington could be handled more effectively by its own separate city committee. While nominally still under the county chairman, the city organization can operate independently.

The rural county is divided into ten representative districts called hundreds, and each of these hundreds is divided by the New Castle County Department of Elections into smaller election districts, roughly according to population. The city is divided into twelve wards, which in turn are also divided into election districts. The number of these districts in each hundred varies from two to nineteen. As

two members are picked from each election district in the county, the county executive committee turns out to be an extremely large committee of almost one hundred fifty members.

The committee men and women in each hundred of rural New Castle County and in each of the twelve wards in the city also serve as the members of the local ward and hundred committees. They in turn elect their own hundred and ward chairman and secretary. The city committee members, in addition to electing their local ward leaders, also elect the chairman of the city committee, plus two vice-chairmen, a secretary, and a treasurer. The chairman of the County Executive Committee is supposedly elected by this mass membership from the rural hundreds and the eleven members from the city of Wilmington.

Although a party or any association may not always act in conformity to its rules, the rules still provide the basis for its actions, and in the event of any dissension they may be appealed to. Because the county rules determine the party's formal structure and organization, they should be studied closely.

For many years the rules for the government of the Democratic County Executive Committee were in the hands of only a few individuals. They were practically the property of Harry Smith, the secretary, who had served for more than twenty years as the secretary of the committee. He kept party members informed as to the rules. In 1938, the secretary made the mistake of going along with the losing faction in an intra-party fight, he was ousted from his lifelong position. The new sec-

retary, finding himself in a strange post, thought it best to print the rules in booklet form and to see that they were distributed.

Similar stories apply to the city and state rules. The city rules are especially hard to obtain. At this moment there are only two known copies of the city rules. Old time politicians feel that it is easier to stay in the saddle if potential opponents are kept in the dark about the rules. When the city rules were printed in the early thirties, the ward chairmen were specifically told to hold on to them and not to pass them around. Whether the rules disappeared with malice aforethought or just naturally dropped out of circulation, is not certain. The fact remains that they have been difficult to obtain.

The county rules were last amended by a well-attended county convention held in Wilmington, April 8, 1922.¹ Previous to this, they had been adopted at a Democratic convention held in the town of New Castle on September 2, 1876, and amended again at a convention in Wilmington on February 3, 1898. The only important changes made in 1922 were to admit women to the county committee and to set a new date for the election of county committee members. In addition, a quorum needed to conduct a meeting, which had never before been provided, was set at fifteen. The amended rules increased the committee membership at that date from fifteen to seventy-six members.

A new county committee is elected and organized every two years.

1. Every Evening, April 8, 10, 1922.

The chairman is required under the rules to call for an election of committee members "on the first Saturday in March in every year when a general election is held." The call for this election must be issued at least twenty days prior to the date of the election. A public announcement of the call is usually found in the Wilmington papers, and the secretary of the committee notifies each hundred chairman by letter that a reorganization of the county committee is in order. Every registered citizen is allowed to vote at this election, if he is a member of the Democratic party. He must be willing, if challenged, to publicly affirm this fact and to swear that he is a "bona fide resident" of the election district from which the committee member is to be chosen.

More than half of the writing in the rule book is concerned with complicated, if not complete, instructions respecting the election of committee members. After explaining the involved procedure in detail, the election problem is resolved in a short closing paragraph. If the party members in any hundred so desire, the committee members may be elected by a simple procedure. The rules say:

"The voters of the respective election districts may determine at any time prior to the said first Saturday in March in every year when a regular general election is held whether it is necessary to hold an election by ballot on the said first Saturday in March, provided the same meetings in the respective election districts are advertised by posting at least five notices of the said meeting in at least five of the most public places of the said election district for at least five days prior to said meetings, and the members of the County Executive Committee from the respective election districts shall prepare and post said notices."²

2. Rules for the Government of the Democratic County Executive Committee of New Castle County.

This is the usual manner in which committee members are elected. The five public notices may not always be posted. For example, over a fifty year span in Pencader Hundred there have been only two contested committee selections with formal elections carried out. One would find this true in most hundreds which are tightly organized, or in which the Democratic party is decidedly a minority with only a few active partisans. Even when there are two or more local factions contending for authority in the hundred, the informal election is allowed to stand. Both sides are able to estimate closely how much strength they could muster in a show-down.

Little would be gained by forcing a formal ballot, even if a faction thought they had a good chance to win. In the first place it should be pointed out that being elected a committee man or woman may be considered an empty honor. The County Committee is so large that a single individual often has little to say on his own. The only time that County Committee elections generate any real interest is when a fight for the leadership of the County Committee is anticipated. Even then it is usually difficult to find a full slate of candidates willing to allow their names to go up as contestants for the positions. Again, it's the same old story that few people even in the articulate segments of society are interested in political maneuvers. They fail to realize how important the influence of the County Committee can be in effecting proper leadership in the government.

Returning to the county rules, we find that the only party office specifically mentioned in the rules to be elected every two years is

the county chairman. The position of secretary is mentioned twice. In case of the death or disability of the chairman, the secretary is empowered to act in his behalf. Although no other offices are mentioned, as a matter of custom - and also to keep the women workers happy - a vice-chairman and treasurer are also elected.³ None of the positions filled by women involves any work or responsibility.

The re-organization of the County Executive Committee is specifically called for on the second Saturday of March or a week after the new committee members have been elected. The meeting is to be held in Wilmington, and fifteen members are needed to constitute a quorum. If two-thirds of the members concur, the committee may select a chairman "outside of the committee, if they deem it wise." It has been held in the past that although no other offices were mentioned in this provision, all other positions could be filled by members outside the committee.

The duties of the County Committee are listed in the rules. The most important function, of course, is to elect a county chairman. The committee is supposed to levy a fair assessment on each candidate at a primary election. They are to comply with the state law entitled "An Act to provide for the purity of primary election in New Castle County," and to distribute at each voting place, where a primary election is to be held, the ballots required in each district. In addition to these

3. At the last two committee elections the positions of secretary and treasurer have been combined into one position, and two women vice-chairmen (coming from the city) have been elected.

specific services required by the rules, it is the duty of the committee "to supervise the campaign and direct the calls for mass meetings." In case of a contested nomination, the County Committee has a right to determine the winner by a majority vote of the whole number of the committee. In case of death, declination or inability to serve, or removal of any person nominated as a Democratic candidate, the County Committee fills the vacancy with a suitable person of its own selection or by ordering new primaries.

Delegates for a state convention, to nominate candidates for Governor and other state officers, U.S. Senator and Representative to Congress, or to appoint delegates to a national convention, are chosen at another election. This election will be held at the call of the state committee on a date they select. If no date is recommended by the state committee, the day is to be selected by the County Executive Committee.

The number of delegates, and how they should be apportioned is determined by the state committee according to rules which can only be amended at a convention. To serve as a delegate from any hundred, one has to file his name with the county secretary. If there are more than six people in one representative district who want to be delegates, then a formal election can be demanded. It is extremely rare for a contest for delegates to be held in any hundred. It is usually just a question of accepting the list of names filed by the hundred chairman with the county secretary.

The gist of the rules are summarized in the preceding paragraphs. There are only two other provisions found in the rules. One explains the principle of rotation by which state senators are nominated. The several hundreds that comprise one senatorial district are supposed to have the nomination rotated from hundred to hundred so that no district can monopolize the position. The other provision provides a difficult method by which the county rules can be amended. If any amendments or alterations are desired, they can only be made at a county convention. Any such suggestions must be made in writing and "signed by at least one hundred Democrats, in good standing, and presented to the County Executive Committee." The committee will then issue a call for a convention, composed of six delegates from each representative district outside of Wilmington, and three from each of the twelve wards in Wilmington. The delegates to this convention are to be elected in the same manner as committee members.

The formal organization of a political party is no more complicated in New Castle County than elsewhere. According to the usual concept of a state political organization, the county unit with its chairman is supposed to co-ordinate the precinct or local election district with the county and the county with the state; and county leaders are responsible for seeing that every precinct or election district has a leader capable of developing effective organization at the grass roots. The rules of the county organization were formulated with these objectives in mind. The working organization of a county unit, however, may deviate widely in practice from the formal arrangements outlined in the party rules.

The next step will be to study the actual operation of the county organization. Personal working arrangements will be explored; informal and formal controls over the party will be analyzed; and in addition, an attempt will be made to discover how the leaders of the organization maintain their authority.

CHAPTER 4

NEW CASTLE COUNTY DEMOCRACY
AS A WORKING ORGANIZATION

In stating the purpose behind this study of a county political unit it was pointed out that an attempt would be made to get behind the formal political organization for a closer examination of the actual operation. There can be little doubt that the informal organization does not correspond to outward appearances. Nor do the actual working arrangements always follow the prescribed rules. In a recent book on state administration in Delaware it was pointed out:

"Regardless of what specific type of formal organization is prescribed for a state, patterns of informal, inter-personal arrangements will tend to occur. Formal organization may facilitate or impede these arrangements, it will not eliminate them. 'Every government is likely to develop certain ways of handling public affairs which are not mentioned in any constitutional article or even in an ordinary law.'"¹

The informal practices of the Democratic party in New Castle County may vary considerably from what is supposedly proper. But people are only too willing to regard political parties with a suspicious eye, and many lies and half-truths about politics find easy access to gullible ears. A word of caution must be given so that any informal practices discovered will not be misinterpreted as further examples of political skull-duggery. Politicians are

1. Dolan, Paul, The Organization of State Administration in Delaware, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951, 93. Baltimore, Md.

not always looking for new ways to thwart the public will. Many innovations in the form of personal relations between party leaders are undoubtedly needed if the party is going to function properly.

Before going further, it is necessary to make a general statement concerning the clash between local autonomy and oligarchy that is continuously going on within the county organization. After the publication of Robert Michels' polemic book on European political parties, the "iron law of oligarchy" has been accepted to some degree by most political scientists.² A factor that is very often ignored in the analysis of party structure, is the inherent capacity of the local organizations in the wards and hundreds to remain independent of the county organization. The oversight is caused primarily because to all outward appearances little independence is ever exercised on the part of the local committees. But it should not be ignored. Local autonomy is a submerged, but highly influential factor in every county organization, and county chairmen and party leaders are acutely conscious of this fact. Every political move made to strengthen the party hierarchy or consolidate organizational controls has to take into consideration the counter-vailing tendency for local independence. Whenever this capacity for autonomy is ignored, as it sometimes is, the county chairman finds a splintered organization in his hands. The opposition party, unless it suffers the same weakness, easily wins the next election.

The large size of the County Committee is considered by several

2. Michels, Robert, Political Parties (New York: International, 1915).

former county leaders as an organizational weakness. Obviously, an "executive" committee of almost one hundred fifty members is too large to work together effectively. Consequently, all the duties and decisions are left to the chairman or secretary. If a chairman should desire the advice of the County Committee, he would find it next to impossible to convene more than a handful of the members. Past experience has shown that the only ones to show up would be a few hopeful contenders for any political job that may be available at the moment. As far as any general advice on developing campaign strategy or on solving any of the many problems that arise with the conduct of a county wide campaign is concerned, the chairman soon learns that the majority of the committeemen are content to let him do the best he can. There are rarely more than thirty or forty members present at organizational meetings, even for the election of county officers.

The unwieldiness of the committee makes the position of the county chairman extremely important. The tenor of the entire campaign can be established by the chairman. If the campaign is conducted vigorously and if the election is closely contested in every district, the chairman deserves a large share of the credit. A chairman with all the responsibilities of a campaign thrust in his hands, whether he wants them or not, must serve as the party spokesman and should be ready to answer all charges leveled at his party by the opposition. The fact that sometimes not a single word appears in the papers from the county chairman is often indicative that the party is suffering from ineffectual leadership.

In recognition of the actual power of the local hundred chairman and the lack of power of the large County Executive Committee, we find an informal organizational modus operandi. When important county-wide problems of nominations, patronage or campaign strategy arise, the county chairman, secretary and other party leaders meet in a group with the hundred chairmen. Under effective leadership, these meetings can prove to be fruitful. If nothing else, they serve as forums in which problems can be thrashed and plans laid accordingly. For example, there were fifty jobs available for patronage on the recently opened Delaware Memorial Bridge. (The State Highway Commission, in charge of such placement, is under Democratic control.) The plan was to allot twenty-five of the jobs to the city and twenty-five to the county. In order to find out just who should have the jobs, and also to instruct the chairmen in the necessary steps for securing jobs, the county chairman called a meeting of the hundred chairmen. Also, whenever the party leaders have a candidate in mind for an important nomination, like Governor or Senator, they may call a meeting of the hundred chairmen to win their approval. A county chairman will sometimes utilize these same meetings to discuss the problems of campaign expenses.

One of the more important duties of the chairman is the handling of party campaign funds. Although a separate committee treasurer is often elected, this person rarely has charge of the money. The sums of money which the chairman has to spend are considerable, even though the Democratic Party has been the poorer of the two parties in the county. In the 1950 off-year election, the county committee

listed \$7,341.00, for New Castle County expenses with the County Clerk of Peace. In the 1948 Presidential election, when both parties put on their best efforts, New Castle County (city and rural) raised \$22,000.00 to \$23,000.00. This was in addition to the amount raised by the state committee. Forty to sixty dollars was allotted to each election district by the chairman, and an additional one hundred dollars was given to every county candidate to spend if his chances for winning the election looked good to the party leaders.

It is well known that both parties spend a good deal more money at each election than is accounted for to the Clerk of Peace as required by law. Every county politician will declare that it takes a great deal of money to run a party. Aside from legitimate expenses of a campaign, like hiring the necessary workers and paying for radio time, there are certain districts with a high percentage of voters who require encouragement before casting their ballot.

This type of extra-legal expense is very difficult to control by county chairmen, even if they are so inclined. Money being spent in this fashion is entirely in the hands of the local hundred or ward chairman, or one of their faithful workers. A large portion of such funds are raised by contributions collected right in the local hundred and officially unreported to county or state committees. It would be difficult to prove that any party is breaking the law. No one ever buys votes directly, only workers are hired. The workers in turn can control from ten to twenty-five voters, and the work involved is seeing that those voters get to the polls and cast their ballot

for the party who hired the workers. Every chairman is careful to list each person who handles votes for him as a worker.

An effective organization, for example, can give one party direct strength in the colored sections of the county. As an illustration of this fact, we can compare Pencader Hundred with St. George's Hundred. The latter, in recent elections has been as strongly Democratic as the former has been Republican. In the early part of the century when New Castle County swung from the Democratic column to the Republican column, both were for many years Republican controlled. Any attempts made by Democratic workers to win over the Negro vote were met with stony silence.

In the third election district of St. George's, in the section of Middletown known as "Hamtown," where the majority of the colored voters resided, the Democrats began to make slow headway. Gradually they began to wean the younger colored voters away from their traditional allegiance to the party of Abe Lincoln. By gaining the confidence of the younger leaders and seeing that they were properly taken care of, the districts eventually went solidly Democratic. The majorities were so large that the entire hundred swung back to the Democratic ledger. The advent of F.D.R. made the task much easier, but still the transformation, especially in its early stages, took a great deal of persistent, diligent effort on the part of local party workers. To keep the Democratic majorities, in the face of strenuous Republican opposition, requires continuous work.

In the first election district of the adjoining hundred, Pen-

cader, we find a similar bloc of negro votes. But the colored voters here have remained strictly under Republican control. There is only one valid explanation for the Democrat's failure to gain control of them. Lack of an effective organization in Pencader seems to be the answer. In the early thirties, it appeared for a while as if the Democrats would be able to do the job as more and more colored voters began to vote Democratic. In a few short years, however, almost all the Democratic workers who were beginning to make progress in this work, either suddenly died or moved out of the district. The Republicans reëntrenched themselves and, now, it would require a great deal of patient and persistent effort by energetic workers to un-seat the well-directed Republican organization. Adequate sums of money would also be imperative.

Looking at the whole problem from the organizational point of view, it is obvious the more workers a party has in any election district the better the chances are for victory. Many hundred chairmen or district leaders are against buying votes, but still feel it is necessary to pay individuals twenty-five dollars for the use of their cars on election day. When a car is used for only one or two trips with only ten or twelve voters carried to the polls, it looks as though there is only a very thin line that divides the honest action from the dishonest.

When the county chairman is only a figure head, as he occasionally is, the position of the county secretary becomes more important. Every secretary, since the departure of the late Harry Smith from this office,

has been a trained lawyer. There are several reasons for this. Political parties are regulated by rather strict state election laws. It is the responsibility of the county committee to abide by these laws. A legal training is helpful in seeing that all state provisions are followed and to see that the party does not leave itself open to charges of illegal conduct.

Still another reason for choosing lawyers for the position of secretary is to direct the large amount of secretarial work involved in running the party. The amount of work is considerable. Notices for all meetings have to be mailed to every county committee member, instructions for each hundred chairman, lists of names for registration and election officials for each election district in the county have to be supplied to the Department of Elections; official notices have to be placed in the newspapers and notarizations made of this fact and state primary election forms have to be filled out. Even a trained stenographer has to put in many hours at a typewriter before the work can be finished. The burden and expense of actual secretarial work involved is considerable, but this is not the real reason for having a lawyer on the job. Any person of average intelligence could do this work, if he had the time. The real reason for having a lawyer in this position (as will be explained later) is that the leaders of the party, who are in turn usually associated with a leading law firm, want to keep in touch with what is happening in the county. They are able to do this by having a member of their firm in a responsible position in the organization.

There is one duty of the county party officials that is not

mentioned in either the party's own rules or in state election laws. This job is the most important, the most complicated, and the most troublesome obligation of all. The chairman in the event of victory at the polls is expected to take charge of all patronage problems. One county chairman who had actively participated in politics for many years declared that the one task which he found most displeasing in politics was handling of patronage. It is a political axiom that for every friend made by a political appointment, ten enemies are made. Every chairman has his own method for awarding jobs. How effectively he performs this job may determine the party's strength in the next election. It may even influence his own tenure of office. The chairman, whenever possible, allows the actual appointment to be made by the ward or hundred chairman. It would be closer to the truth to say that the chairman is forced to allow the local chairman to make appointments if he is going to maintain an effective county wide organization. The county chairman merely approves the local leader's choice, seeing only that the appointee is not inimical to the county wide organization. However, if there is a split within the district, the chairman has to be careful to see that the right members get the right jobs. Jobs are given to those who have proven to be the better workers, or perhaps, the faction which is more willing to cooperate with the county leaders is rewarded. The chairman has to steer clear of workers who may be unpopular in their own district and see that potential troublemakers are kept out. Hundreds of such matters have to be dealt with, and it is no wonder that the position of county chairman often goes begging.

A victorious chairman has about 150 county jobs at his disposal which he has to divide among the workers in the wards and hundreds. Very often a conscientious chairman will have a formula to go by based on the amount of Democratic votes returned from each district with bonuses for those returning Democratic majorities. The city chairman is allowed to take charge of all county appointments allotted to the city with understanding that he first receive approval of the county chairman. The 1949 fight for the chairmanship of the city committee was fought because this understanding was not being kept. The struggle will be examined closely because the contest illustrates several intra-county party controls. William McClafferty, the city chairman at the time, was - according to party leaders - trying to build his own power in the city organization. He began to act too independently and combined forces with John Hartnett, and temporarily with Gilbert Pierce, who were the Democratic majority members on the county Levy Court.* The county leaders thought it would be better to replace McClafferty with a man who would be more cooperative. For a while it was touch-and-go who would win the fight, for McClafferty had built a strong following in the city. The county leaders cracked the patronage whip. The Democrats had recently taken over control of the State Highway Commission with many job opportunities. Every ward chairman in Wilmington was notified that if he didn't come through, he would not receive any of these jobs.

The fight still did not come to an end. The McClafferty forces

* See page 5, footnote 4.

had apparently good control over McClafferty's home ward, the Seventh Ward. This was the second largest ward in the city. In addition, they appeared to have substantial support in the largest city ward, the Ninth Ward with thirty-two election districts and potentially sixty-four votes for either side in the city committee. In critical situations like this the actions of both factions can take a turn for the worse. An intra-party fight must be conducted by the party itself without the help of state regulations. Sharp practices, of a questionable nature, are reverted to with the usual excuse or explanation that the same tactics are going to be used by the opposition.

In this particular fight, control over the Ninth Ward would be the deciding factor. A big bloc of votes under the control of individual chairmen was ready to flop over to either side, depending upon which side showed the greater strength. There are a surprisingly large number of party workers and minor leaders who are unconcerned over which faction wins a fight. Either opportunists or sincerely indifferent, they carry water on both their shoulders. McClafferty, supported to some extent by the Democratic Levy Court members, was still a person to be reckoned with. If he could win the city chairmanship again, he could cause trouble to those who had opposed him. A determined fight would be waged for the Ninth Ward, and rumors were flying back and forth that each side would try to load the meeting place with voters from outside the district.

As far as can be determined, both sides were planning to do whatever was necessary to win the election, but the organization

forces were a little larger and a little more shrewd. They moved into McClafferty's home stronghold and put up an entire slate of candidates for the committee positions. A large bloc of McClafferty's supporters were forced to remain in the ward to insure the defeat of the organization seate. In addition the organization used questionable tactics to defeat McClafferty's supporters in the Ninth Ward. Apparently such tactics were unnecessary as the county leaders won decisively 200 to 92. The fight they had forced in the Seventh Ward, and the use of the patronage whip of Highway Commission jobs would have been sufficient.

This same fight affords an illustration of the effectiveness of keeping party rules out of circulation. According to the city rules anyone of the candidates for district committeeman could have demanded a formal nominative election which would be held on the last Saturday in October. McClafferty, by his own admission, never had a copy of the rules while serving as city chairman. If a new election had been called, the McClafferty forces might have been able to win. Especially, because the questionable actions of the party leaders during the voting in the Ninth Ward had'aroused some antagonism among regular party members. A written protest was actually made to the secretary of the City Committee, but it was not made early enough (five days in advance) to allow for a duly posted formal election on the last Saturday of October. Familiarity with the rules would have avoided this stumbling block.

Similar controls may be used in the rural districts of the county. However, very rarely is a fight forced over a recalcitrant hundred chairman. The explanation for this is that a hundred taken individu-

ally is of lesser importance than the city organization. Even a large hundred, like Christiana with 38 committeemen, could accomplish very little by acting independently. What actually happens is that the organization takes advantage of the independence of the rural committees. By seeing that they retain close control over two or three hundreds like Christiana and Mill Creek Hundred they have a solid bloc of forty or fifty votes. With this bloc of votes, (which does not have to be a majority) they are able to retain control of the county executive committee over the scattered opposition of any hundred chairman.

The way the party organization is constituted makes it possible for the individual chairman to retain a huge degree of independence. If he can control enough votes in his own bailiwick and if he is not interested in county or state opposition job, the ward or hundred chairman can completely ignore the wishes of the county leaders.

Most hundred and ward chairmen in the county have retained control over their own committees for many years. It is not rare for one chairman to serve for 15 or 20 years without opposition, and in fact, one chairman of a large hundred served for 44 years. In a few districts sharply divided into factional groups, the chairman may not have served as long, but still he would be an important leader of long standing in the district.

There are two considerations that make such long tenures possible. First, there is the willingness of a person to take on the thankless

job of a party chairman, a position which is often unremunerative for many years and requires during election years hours of unpaid work. If the chairman does hold a political job, the pay is rarely large enough to attract competitors. A second factor is the ability of the chairman to serve impartially and to keep clear of factional arguments. A chairman who can fulfill both of these qualifications and at the same time perform a reasonably adequate job of electioneering, can hold his position as long as he desires.

Because of this potential independence on the part of hundreds of chairmen, county chairmen usually refrain from getting involved in purely local factional fights. When more than one man is trying to win a representative or senatorial nomination, county leaders know that it is wiser to maintain a hands off policy rather than make more enemies by backing one or the other hopeful. If both men are suitable candidates the chairman's job is to try to work out an agreement in order to avoid a primary fight. Whenever both candidates remain adamant, the wisest thing to do is to allow the local Democrats to decide for themselves in a primary who should be their standard leader. Outside interference is unwelcome.

Although a hundred or ward chairman can remain independent and flaunt the county leaders, the ones who do are extremely rare. In the first place, with no county or state jobs at his disposal, the chairman would find it difficult to maintain any loyal workers. He would soon discover the only ones to receive jobs in his hundred would be potential opponents loyal to the county leaders and not to him. In the

event of a complete break with the organization, all county campaign funds would be stopped.

Rarely would such a drastic break be allowed to occur. The harm done to the entire party ticket would be irreparable and a compromise of some sort would be attempted at almost any cost. The only unpardonable sin in a political organization is to throw support to the opposition ticket.

Because of the juxtaposition of the two opposing tendencies toward local autonomy and oligarchic control within the county organization, we find that political power remains fluid passing back and forth, up and down the hierarchical scale from position to position and from person to person never quite lighting to stay in one position for more than an instant.

To completely control this power one would have to control the entire political organization and all the people that work within it. This is a physical impossibility for an organization the size of a county unit. When a county leader, in a position of authority, is unable to compromise, influence or persuade other leaders or concede when necessary, he soon discovers that the power he thought he held by virtue of his position has disappeared completely.

The most important function of a political organization may well be to win elections, but the most important duty of the leaders of the organization is to control the nominations of party standard bearers. This fact is often forgotten. In examining the actual structure and

and working arrangements of a county unit, it is important to note how nominations are brought about and what controls may be exercised over them.

The important key to the control of the organization is achieved by understanding the entire county organization, in both its formal and informal aspects. The person or persons who know intimately the positions within the party structure, which at a given moment may hold a portion of the total organization power, are able through this knowledge to be well on the way towards controlling the nominations. This understanding can only be acquired after years of experience within the party structure. Not only is knowledge of the organization needed, but also an understanding is required of the personalities who fill the positions within the organization. The important chairman must be known personally. Those who can be dominated must be separated from those who must be persuaded.

Tied in with the intangible factor of knowledge over party organization are other equally important controls. One such control is based on the inability of the party to recruit more than a bare minimum of necessary workers. Within the party there is in most instances a complete overlapping between committee members, delegates to state conventions, and those who are nominated as party candidates. The most striking thing to the eyes of an observer on first seeing the party in action is the astonishingly small number of citizens who manage the local organization and in turn help manage the county and

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state organization. A study of party candidates for county posts and state representatives and senatorial positions will show that a large portion of them at every election are local committee chairmen. Almost every delegate to a state convention is also a committee-man or woman in his or her local hundred, and every state candidate has at one time or another served as a local county or state committee member, chairman, or delegate. This over-lapping of delegates, committee men, and candidates makes it much easier for those within the organization to retain control over those who would like to place their name on an election ballot under the party seal. It should be emphasized again and again that this over-lapping and compactness of party organization is caused primarily by the unwillingness of the vast majority of the citizens to work at politics. The desire of those who are already in the organization to exclude those who are not is only a minor factor. Anyone who wants to enter politics will find it easy, but only a very few are bitten by the bug. In New Castle County affinity to politics appears to be a family disease.

Every party has, of course, concrete controls over nominations. Some look upon these controls as means of keeping out undesirables as party candidates, others as means of gaining badly needed finances, still others as underhand methods of discouraging democratic action. At each county organizational meeting a filing fee is set for every position on the county and local ticket. A candidate, in order to have his name entered on the party's primary ballot, has to pay this fee. The stronger the party the higher the fee. For example, for many years the Democratic filing fees ranged from \$25.00 to \$200.00

for county positions. After the 1948 Democratic victory, along with the general price rise, the filing fees were raised from \$50.00 to \$500.00 for the top county position of sheriff. (The sheriff's job is evidently a profitable post.)

Another resolution passed at the same meeting helps assure the organization of control over delegates to state conventions. Anyone who desires to contest the selections for delegates must first post \$75.00 for every election district in which the contest is to be held. The organization is always certain to have their delegates listed first to force the opposition to pay for any contests.

Still another resolution cements the control of the organization over the county ticket. The secretary and chairman are authorized to fill all vacancies that occur. As almost half the positions on the ticket are not filed for, the power of the chairman and secretary to build a strong ticket is considerable.

In the selection of the county ticket, certain informal arrangements have grown through the years to guide the chairman in his work. Certain jobs, like Prothonotary and Clerk of Peace, are allotted to the city, and the city chairman's advice must be considered. Other jobs, like County Treasurer and Sheriff, go to the rural sections. The position of Register in Chancery is usually allotted to a member of the large Polish sections of the city in the Ninth Ward. The city chairman, of course, is guided by the advice of the Polish leaders. St. George's Hundred, with its strong and active Democratic organization, must be allowed at least one spot on the ticket and

usually walks off with two or three.

The county chairman has to come to an agreement with each of the candidates, that the jobs to be filled in the county offices, will be appointed with the approval of the county organization. The Levy Court is particularly important in this respect. In 1948, for example, Gilbert Pierce, the chairman of Brandywine Hundred, filed for the post of Levy Court Commissioner. Pierce, although never definitely anti-organizational, was not considered exactly reliable from the organizational point of view. The county leaders proceeded to file Francis Dolan's name in opposition to Pierce. Then Pierce was called to the county chairman's office and told that if an agreement could not be reached regarding Levy Court jobs, the organization would force a primary fight for the nomination. Although Pierce probably felt that Dolan's nomination was only a bluff, he agreed to the arrangement.

For a political party to win elections, a machinery of organization is needed. For an organization to function, leadership is required. Throughout the discussion on party organization and control, frequent references have been made to other county leaders beside the party chairmen and secretaries. To make a complete picture of the county organization these other leaders should be investigated.

Rank and file Democrats for many years have used the words "Ninth and Market" when referring to the top command in the party. These words refer to Delaware's oldest active law firm, now known

as Berl, Potter and Anderson, and the personalities who have worked in the office or else have been closely connected with it. "Ninth and Market" has served as a symbol of top authority for the state organization, as well as county organization in the Democratic party.

A brief history of the firm will establish the background for this very important source of Democratic authority. The firm has been in existence for about one hundred twenty years and was founded by Andrew Caldwell Gray. Continued by his son, Judge George Gray, with Herbert H. Ward, the firm was known as Gray and Ward. Andrew Gray, grandson of the founder and son of the Judge, joined the firm along with John Neary, and the firm was known for many years as Ward, Gray, and Neary. In 1927 the firm consisted of Andrew C. Gray, Clarence Southerland, James H. Hughes, Jr., E. Ennals Berl, Herbert Ward, Jr., and associates William S. Potter and Paul Leahy. It continued under the name of Ward and Gray. In 1940 the firm became Southerland, Berl, Potter and Leahy.

When Paul Leahy was appointed to a U.S. District Judgeship, the last name was dropped, and in 1951 when Southerland was appointed to the state Supreme Court, the firm assumed its present title of Berl, Potter and Anderson. The number of judges and U.S. District Attorneys to come from this office attests to the political power of this old Delaware law firm.

In the years before 1894, when Delaware was a Democratic stronghold, there were many important Democratic families whose numbers

fought for the honor of serving as the party's candidates for high office. One of the most respected and certainly one of the best liked leaders of his day was Andrew Gray, the grandson of the founder of the firm of Berl, Potter and Anderson. Andrew Gray was both a loyal friend and a skillful politician who helped establish present-day "Ninth and Market's" claims to political authority. One of Andrew Gray's closest friends was Henry T. Graham. (They were boxing partners in their early manhood.) Henry Graham had risen through the ranks from Ward chairman to chairman of the state committee, and his prestige grew correspondingly. To this day, Graham's political astuteness is recognized and respected by younger party leaders, and he still has his own private office in the firm which his best friend's father founded. As a matter of custom, no important political decision is made by party leaders without first consulting Mr. Graham.

The Wolcotts and the Marvels, with both their law offices close-by, joined forces with Andrew Gray and his associates, and for the majority of the last fifty years the top command of the Democratic party has rested either directly, or indirectly, in the Ninth and Market Street offices of Berl, Potter and Anderson. It should be pointed out that many large corporations are represented by this law firm, including the powerful Pennsylvania Railroad. Also noteworthy, is the fact that part of the members of the firm have always been top Republican leaders and that every large law firm in the city is almost equally divided into Republican and Democratic members.

The acknowledged Democratic leaders of the present are E. Ennals

Berl, Democratic National Committeeman, and William S. Potter, past State Committee Chairman. To understand how they retain their authority would be to understand the organization and controls of a county political party. The political power which these two men command is based primarily on two factors: political acumen and control over main sources of Democratic campaign funds. Which of the two is more important would be hard to determine, but both are essential.

The question of finances is one of the most guarded secrets in politics. Very little definite information is known about who donates and how much. A part of the power of Berl and Potter is that they know personally most, if not all the local contributors. Only the most trusted party leaders are allowed to see the list which contains the names of those who can be expected to swell the party funds. The majority of the donators wish to remain anonymous as far as the general public is concerned.

To analyze the influence of money, as scanty as the information may be, is not nearly as difficult as explaining the other factor that is needed for political control, namely, political acumen. An attempt has already been made to explain how complete knowledge of the formal and informal party organization is necessary before any of the controls within the party can be understood. Absolute rule over the party by virtue of position or pecuniary support is utterly impossible. The leaders picked or backed by Berl or Potter must give evidence of leadership. Once in a position of responsibility, such leaders are rarely dictated to. Suggestions may be made and advice

may be given, but for the most part, a hands-off policy is maintained. The chief concern of "Ninth and Market" is that a leader is not picked who is definitely unfriendly to them. The amount of freedom that an individual assumes would, of course, vary from person to person and would depend a great deal on this person's ability. What I have called political acumen is in large measure knowing exactly how far a party leader can go in asserting authority over the organization. There are times when a county leader has to pull in his horns and concede points all down the line. There are other occasions when determined action is demanded; if a firm hand is not used, the entire organization will be weakened. Equally important is the ability to capture any potentially powerful leader as he is beginning to make his climb to power within the party. This is the art of knowing when to concede! If the potential leader is one who will not cooperate or is disreputable to the extent that he can harm the entire organization, he must be defeated when the time is ripe; sometimes at the expense of temporarily weakening the party.

The charge has often been leveled that the class of professional lawyer-politicians are more interested in serving their clients than in seeing that the party wins elections, or that the public interest is served, yet the record does not substantiate this charge. Regardless of the influence wielded by the clientele of these law firms, the fact remains that the political leadership in the Democratic Party in Delaware is acutely aware of the need to reconcile the many demands thrusting themselves into the political party from all parts

of the state. To cater to one particular interest at the expense of others would be to court disaster at the polls. Such an event is the last thing any political leader can contemplate!

As an indication of informal controls, we find from 1936 to the present, either the chairman or the secretary of the county organization has usually been a member of the firm of Berl and Potter, or connected with it through family ties. There was one exception in 1938, when for two years, the organization lost control of both the county and city committee. The fight in 1938 for the control of both city and county organization was part of a state-wide fight staged for control over the Democratic State Committee between anti-organization, and organization forces.

It can readily be determined that scattered throughout the county organization, one can find plenty of dissatisfied politicians, especially if the party is a recent winner at the polls. This opposition has at its basis disappointed job-seekers, frustrated party members who feel they are capable of leadership and have been overlooked, and some sincere democrats who feel that the party chiefs are too conservative and too authoritarian in their leadership. An old county leader pointed out that it is very easy for someone who is not in a position of authority to win temporary support for himself. The only thing he has to do is make the rounds of the county and promise the same job to ten different people.

It is not necessary to go into all the details of the New Castle County phase of the 1938 struggle, mentioned above. Some of the conclusions need only be pointed out. The anti-organization forces had enough support in the county in 1938 to elect their man as county chairman. The city chairmanship had also been won by the anti-organization people. Both top positions in New Castle County were in control of the opposition. Yet two years later the county chairman refused to try again for the county chairmanship, saying that while serving as county chairman he had received no support from the state chairman. He knew that he would be defeated. The city chairman was replaced by another - also without a contest.

Both men discovered that although in positions of apparent authority in the county organization, they could wield little power, and what they had won was an empty victory. The governor refused to consult them in matters of state patronage. The county jobs which had been won in 1936 by the Democrats were mostly in the hands of organization followers, and Republican control of the Levy Court removed any possible hope of using Court patronage to further their cause. The erstwhile county chairman admitted that he soon learned that it takes a great deal of money to run a county political organization. He and his supporters were able to raise only a small share of the money needed to run a campaign. The organization leaders had only to sit back and wait for the opposition to crumble of its own weight. As

footnote to the entire episode, the Republicans stepped in and temporarily resurrected the anti-organization forces. The deposed county and city chairman headed a Liberal-Democratic ticket which went on the ballot in the 1940 election with the avowed aim of splitting the Democratic Party to insure a Republican victory, but by so doing, read themselves out of the party and solved the problem of a factional split with the regular Democratic organization.

The factions in an intra-party struggle are known respectively as the anti-organization and organization forces, and whenever an individual is quarreling with the party leaders, he is known as an anti-organization man. "You can't beat the organization" is the expression most often found upon the lips of disgruntled party members. This phrase states a great truth about our political parties. Hardly ever do you hear the names of party leaders being mentioned, and in the final analysis, the individuals are unimportant. What is important is the "organization." Formally, this organization in New Castle County is divided into ten separate - potentially independent - rural hundred committees and a city committee, divided into twelve potentially independent ward committees. These hundreds and wards are further subdivided into election districts, each with their two local committee members, who can by their efforts in their own districts, either strengthen or weaken the entire organization. Informal working arrangements and practices make this formal organization function and provide the means for effective leadership and control. Close personal relationship must be maintained throughout the party. Political acumen,

based on a knowledge of how far central authority can be exerted over the ever present tendency towards local autonomy, is a important requirement and can only be acquired through years of political experience. Above all, adequate sums of money must be available and the confidence of potential contributors must be gained and kept. All these informal factors must be blended into the formal outline of the party in the correct proportion at the proper time. The individual, no matter how capable he may be, can accomplish very little unless he makes himself a part of the entire picture. If he is completely outside the informal party organization he can spread little authority no matter how high a position he may hold in the formal structure of the party.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study of the New Castle County Democratic party has attempted to depict the interplay occurring between the formal and informal organizations of a county political unit. Controls over the party operation were investigated and an attempt was made to explain how these controls were exercised.

The rules which establish the basis for the organization, were last revised in 1922. The growth of the county since that date has caused the executive committee to be increased to such a large number that it cannot serve as an effective executive body. It serves more in an appointive capacity, its chief duty being to elect a county chairman and secretary. The tendency has been for this committee to transfer most of its authority to these two officers. Although this proclivity towards oligarchy is deplored in some quarters, it is generally considered an inevitable outgrowth of the present party rules. However, if the rules were amended to provide for a more realistic party structure it would not be a guarantee that more responsible leadership would follow.

Below the large county executive committee there are ten local hundred committees and a city committee which is nominally under the county chairman but functions mostly in an antonomous manner. The city committee directs twelve ward committees, each its own, with chairman and secretary. The manner in which the party is organized

makes it possible for the local hundred and ward committees to remain independent of the county leaders if they so desire. This potential capacity for local autonomy is kept in check by the judicious use of party patronage or by the means, but never is it completely removed. The party leaders are forced to respect this capacity for independence and in order to insure a united organization on election days. Every action on their part has to be tempered with the thought that if they fail to concede to the local leaders they may find themselves leading a splintered organization.

The authority, which some of the members of the Delaware bar have maintained for so many years over the county organization, is based in part on the recognition of this tendency toward independence among the local politicians. The state leaders usually have been wise enough to apply their authority with discretion when the times called for it. This factor of knowing the limits of central authority is only a part of the overall knowledge needed to retain control over county politics. This knowledge also consists of knowing the formal and informal organization of the party in its every aspect. Political know-how of this sort involves years of experience within the party structure. Local leaders of varying ability and intelligence have to be dealt with and close personal contacts have to be maintained with at least enough local chieftains to insure a working bloc of votes in the county committee to defeat the scattered opposition which is always present. The local committees, while preserving their independence, are generally unable to combine their forces to defeat the small bloc of organization controlled votes.

In addition to political acumen as a prerequisite to the maintenance of county control there is also another important consideration. Large sums of money are needed to keep a political organization functioning. If anti-organization forces cannot supply this money, they cannot hope to gain control over the party. Top Democratic leaders may contribute only a small part of the money collected, but many of the more important contributors are personal friends of these leaders and others who are substantial business men are willing to contribute only to established party leaders who have proven their political discernment through years of service within the organization. These large contributors would rather see the established state leaders retain their power even though they may at times act cautiously to the desires of the donors, rather than face the greater danger of allowing subservient local leaders or irresponsible opportunists to gain control.

It must not be inferred from the above that the tendency towards centralization is dominant. It has often been pointed out by treatises on the role of the two party systems in the political process in the U. S. that each party serves as a check upon the other. One factor which has been overlooked to a large extent is that the potential power of each subdivision within the state party structure to act autonomously serves as an effective counterbalance to the tendency towards party centralization at state level. In Delaware the real operation of grass roots democracy is made possible as a result of the interplay between the two countervailing tendencies towards county and state oligarchy and local autonomy. The individual citizen,

knowing little or nothing about the organization and leadership of his two parties, fears vaguely that they are boss-ridden and move more to dishonest activity rather than to honest activity. He is unaware that the friends and neighbors who are the local representatives of the county organizations experience these same apprehensions. Local party leaders, aware of their own power and imbued to some extent with a natural disliking for any and all higher authority, keep the roots of democracy watered by resisting the overexpansion of boss-control within the organization thus insuring, at least partially, that the wishes of the individual citizen cannot be continually disregarded.

Leaders of the party, at state as well as county level, have apparently retained their control by not developing strong organization in every ward and hundred of the county. The city committee, including a majority of the ward committees under it, is particularly weak. Top party officials themselves admit the central authority over local organizations is not strong. But by controlling the party finances and favoring only those local chairmen who cooperate with them, they have tended to nurture a group of cooperators. County committeemen are often rubber stamps for these local chairmen especially in those districts with a small Democratic vote. Sometimes the committee member is nothing but a name placed on the membership role of the county committee. In the final analysis, the survival of political democracy at the grass roots resides in the basic clash between the tendency towards political sycophancy and the potentiality of political power resting in the local organization. If this power is even partially

organized it could lead to the point where it would have a strong hand in the formulation of party policy at county and state levels.

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